

FOOD RELIEF AT HOME AND SCHOOL

AND SUPPORTING DISASTER RECOVERY

In a housing crisis, a cost of living crisis, and a climate crisis, we need to go further, faster to ensure a fairer future for everyone in our community.

That means government working with the community to respond with both compassion and strength, in the way we address the needs of those hardest hit by economic inequality, natural disasters and other crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Greens will meet immediate needs in the community while working to transform the systems that are keeping people down, whether it be the supermarket duopoly, the drivers of climate change or the market settings that have created the housing crisis.

THE ACT GREENS WILL:

- ▲ Increase funding for community-run food relief programs, with \$330,000 per year on top of the funding already committed in the most recent ACT Budget
- ▲ Expand the provision of free breakfast and lunch to 20 ACT public schools by 2028, and provide free fruit twice a week to every public school student
- ▲ Support food and emergency relief agencies with improved logistics and storage
- ▲ Fully fund the Social Recovery Framework to strengthen community recovery after a disaster.

FOOD IS NOT A LUXURY

HOUSEHOLDS IN DISTRESS

The cost-of-living crisis is hitting many Canberrans hard. Data from January to July 2023 showed that people who had never before needed to ask for help were relying on assistance to put food on the table. This put the most vulnerable people in our community at even higher risk of physical and mental health challenges.

In the six months from January to June 2024, YWCA Canberra saw a 51% increase in the number of people seeking support at their food hub. Woden Community Services saw a 31% increase in the number of people seeking support at their Community Hub, located in Westfield Woden. In June, St. John's Care saw an extra 100 families than they had seen in May.

It's not just food costs that are causing distress for households. UnitingCare Kippax recently distributed in one day the number of emergency material and financial aid vouchers that they would usually distribute over an entire week, and they are seeing an increase in demand for financial assistance to pay for medical expenses. Salvation Army have seen a 20.68% increase in people needing financial assistance in the six months from January to June 2024.

This growing demand is increasing pressure on food relief and other crisis

services to help people to meet the most basic needs of themselves and their households. In addition to the increase in requests for help, food collection and distribution services have had to cover increased costs of their own – particularly to source the supplies they need from outside the Australian Capital Territory.

In 2023, OzHarvest conducted a Community Needs Survey of the 73 community agencies they supply rescued food to. The survey highlighted that: 73% of agencies had experienced an increase in demand over a 6-month period; 46% of these agencies are not able to meet the current demand; and 31% of the people they support were seeking food relief for the first time.

MORE COMMUNITY FUNDING FOR FOOD & HOUSEHOLD NECESSITIES

The ACT Greens will significantly boost funding for food relief and emergency material aid, to the tune of \$330,000 each year.

This is in addition to the \$913,000 secured by the Greens' Minister responsible for community recovery and emergency relief in the 2024-25 Budget.

The extra boost in funding will ensure that the support available for vital food relief better matches the needs of households in crisis in our community.

Funds will be used to cover the costs of freight for food relief supplies to community pantries in Canberra, which have fluctuated by as much as 150%

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over the previous financial year; and grant funding to community pantries and emergency aid providers in our community sector.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$330,000 per year, totalling \$1.32m over 4 years, in addition to the funding in the 2024-2025 Budget.

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Hungry minds need a full stomach – so the ACT Greens will support the expansion of free breakfast and lunch to 20 schools by 2028. This will help parents with the high cost of food driven up by the supermarket duopoly and improve learning and attendance. Free fruit will be provided in every ACT public school and college twice a week, funded until 2028.

Longer term, schools and the surrounding community will also be encouraged to grow their own fruit, fertilised by compost from school food waste, extending provision beyond two days per week in season. This links with the ACT Greens' [Food for All](#) initiative.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$29.2m over four years for free breakfasts and lunches in 20 ACT public schools.
- \$8.8m over four years for seasonal fruit to be provided to all 55,000 ACT public school students twice weekly.

- Administration of the scheme to be delivered within existing resources.

STRENGTHENING CRISIS SUPPORTS

AN ACTION PLAN FOR RESILIENT FOOD RELIEF SERVICES

Currently, food relief services and social recovery agencies do not have any central storage or warehousing facilities.

This results in limitations on food rescue operations given there is nowhere to store resources, a reliance on supplies shipped from Sydney, high costs to transport food to Canberra, and a less resilient and robust system of resourcing for emergencies.

A plan with options to improve the logistics and storage system in the ACT will provide guidance on how best to address these challenges as Canberra's population grows and emergencies become more frequent. This will include consideration of a central storage facility in the ACT to supply food relief and emergency response organisations and agencies.

Consideration will be given to what options would best meet current and future community needs, how to improve the efficiency of the sector, how any new facilities should operate, and where any new facility would be best located.

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WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$200,000 to formulate the action plan between 2025 and 2026.
- Implementation costs in the action plan are for consideration in future budgets.

FULLY FUND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

Social recovery focuses on the human aspects of recovery after disaster, including health and wellbeing, safety and security, and community connection and cohesion.

Social recovery is the fundamental building block to supporting and re-establishing strong, thriving and resilient communities. Effective and positive outcomes for people impacted by disaster requires individuals, community, business and government to come together to provide and support needs-based priority services so people can rebuild, reconnect and recover.

The 2024 Social Recovery Framework was co-designed to strengthen ACT emergency management arrangements by documenting a clear vision, principles, priorities and outcomes and defined government and community roles and responsibilities. It's our roadmap, designed for and with the community, to ensure we work together well to respond to emergencies and get the community back on its feet.

Although the Social Recovery Framework is now in place, there is currently no

dedicated funding for preparing, planning and delivering social recovery services for the ACT Government or for our social recovery community partners. The ACT Government's ability to both prepare for and meet the social recovery needs of Canberrans is reliant on diverting staff resources from other functions to establish and manage evacuation, relief or recovery centres.

The ACT Greens will take the next steps towards a more resilient community by fully funding the implementation of the Social Recovery Framework. This will ensure that the proper resources are given to ACT Government Directorates and our community partners to do the important planning and preparation needed to be ready to respond when things go wrong.

This funding will enable the ACT Government and community partners to run social recovery exercises; provide ongoing grants funding to social recovery partners in the community to ensure their preparedness, and; a dedicated staff member within the ACT public service to ensure the ACT Government's social recovery preparedness, in coordination with other governments and community partners.

This investment in preparing for and planning to meet the social recovery needs of Canberrans would also enable the ACT Government to leverage future matched Commonwealth funding under the Disaster Ready Fund to further strengthen ACT Government social recovery planning, coordination, and response capacity. Planning for

accessing this fund is already underway, but requires matched investment to access Commonwealth resourcing. Without ACT co-investment of a similar or higher value, the ACT Government will be unable to access the Commonwealth's Disaster Ready Fund.

WHAT'S THE INVESTMENT?

- \$1.755m between 2025 and 2028. This will fund employee expenses, funding for community sector organisations, and funding for CSD and community partners to conduct pre and post high-risk weather season preparedness and review.

WHAT'S NEXT?

A fair and democratic society requires equity of opportunity, equality, respect for diversity, equitable access to resources and social inclusion.

Nobody can look after themselves, do their jobs, care for their families and contribute to the community if they are struggling to afford the food they need to get by. We need to make sure everyone's basic needs are met.

Whether a crisis strikes the community at large, or within your own household, the Greens will ensure our government and community partners are ready to respond with compassion and strength.